

Threatened and Endangered Species in Forests of Wisconsin

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BELL'S VIREO

(*Vireo bellii*)

Federal Status: Not Listed

State Status: Threatened

Description:

The Bell's vireo, 5-5½ inches long, is drab gray to green above, and white or yellow below. Distinguishing markings include a



faint white eye-ring and two pale wing-bars, the lower bar being more prominent.

Habitat: From mid-May to early July, Bell's vireos are uncommon residents of southwestern and south central Wisconsin. They nest in upland and lowland mid-successional shrub habitats along or near rivers and streams. Bell's vireo habitats often include such shrubby plants as lilac, multiflora rose, staghorn sumac, hazelnut, grape, gooseberry and brambles among scattered small trees such as box elder, aspen, hawthorn, hackberry, black cherry and mulberry. Mean height of nest trees and shrubs is 12 feet,



with a range of 2 1/2 to 30 feet. The nest tree or shrub is usually located at the edge of a thicket with adjacent taller trees. A common feature of the nest tree is a low, near-horizontal branch with enough space for the construction of a pendulous nest within a fork of the branch. Nest sites are typically where the nest is protected and concealed by the surrounding vegetation. Tall grasses, forbs and thorny plants as well as vines help form an enclosed space. At least one tree over 9 feet tall from which a bird can sing or call is also necessary for Bell's vireo habitat. During the breeding season, Bell's vireos forage for insects on the lower limbs of trees and shrubs. Usually they establish territories where only short flights across open spaces are required to reach the protection of cover.

Forestry Considerations: Forestry practices that enhance the small tree, shrub and ground cover component of the forest would be beneficial to Bell's vireo. Disturbance should be minimized during the nesting season, around known nest sites.

